

## Appendix C

### Alternative Development Strategies

As discussed in Chapter 6 (pages 6-4 to 6-6), typical suburban development is not a sustainable model for Wylie. Specifically, it is not environmentally, economically, or socially sustainable over the long run for the community because it does not make efficient use of the land, does not create unique places, and does not stand the test of time. With typical subdivisions and shopping centers come high rates of vehicular travel, expanded carbon footprints, inefficient use of land, decreased mental and physical health, and the plague of *“sameness”*; that is, a loss of uniqueness within the community. Alternative development strategies are available to the City to ensure that Wylie remains unique and retains its cultural landscapes, small-town feel, and attractiveness to new residents. While there are many factors that determine the quality and suitability for varying development strategies, the two main factors for determining good development strategies are walkability and context sensitivity. That is, alternative development strategies should focus on the needs of people rather than cars and should be sensitive to the landscape in which it is being applied. There are many tools by which to achieve good development, but a few of them, namely Conservation Planning & Design and New Urbanism are discussed in the following pages.

#### References:

1. Urban Sprawl and Public Health: Designing, Planning, and Building for Healthy Communities by Howard Frumkin, Lawrence Frank, and Richard Joseph Jackson
2. Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream, by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

### Conservation Planning & Design

#### ***A Case for Conservation Planning and Design***

*With extracts from: Arendt, R.; Growing Greener, Putting Conservation into Local Plans and Ordinances; Island Press; 1999 and <http://www.greenerprospects.com/growinggreener.pdf>*

### The Conservation Planning and Design Concept

Each time a property is developed into a residential subdivision, an opportunity exists for adding land to a community-wide network of open space. Although such opportunities are seldom taken in many municipalities, this situation could be reversed fairly easily by making several small but significant changes to three basic local land-use documents - the comprehensive plan, the zoning ordinance and the subdivision and land development ordinance. Simply stated, Conservation Design rearranges the development on each parcel as it is being planned so that half (or more) of the buildable land is set aside as open space. Without controversial *“down zoning,”* the same number of homes can be built in a less land-consumptive manner, allowing the balance of the property to be permanently protected and added to an interconnected network of community green spaces. This *“density-neutral”* approach provides a fair and equitable way to balance conservation and development objectives.

Conservation Planning and Design are attractive to cities since they are relatively easy to implement, do not involve public costs, do not diminish landowner equity, and are not onerous to developers.

### **Why change from conventional subdivision planning and design?**

Conventional Subdivision Planning and Design, as applied in most of the USA, generally refers to residential development in which all the developable land is divided into house lots or streets. The only open space is typically undevelopable wetlands, steep slopes, and storm water management areas. There are no amenable places to walk, no open meadows for wildlife, and no communal playing fields for children. Furthermore, almost all of the land has been cleared, graded, and converted into lawns or private back yards. As a result, residents of conventional subdivisions depend upon their cars even more to bring them social and recreational opportunities. Conservation Planning and Design offers social and recreational advantages over conventional layouts in several distinct ways.

### **Benefits of Conservation Planning and Design**

The benefit of Conservation Planning and Design is threefold:

- Environmental and ecological benefits
- Social and recreational benefits
- Economic Benefits

#### ***Environmental and Ecological Benefits***

In addition to preventing intrusions into inherently unbuildable locations such as wetland and floodplains, conservation subdivision design also protects terrestrial habitats and upland buffers alongside wetlands, water bodies, and watercourses, areas that would ordinarily be cleared, graded, and covered with houses, lawns, and driveways in a conventional development.

The environmental and ecological benefits to employing conservation subdivision design instead of conventional layouts include wildlife management, water quality protection, and greater aquifer recharge.

#### ***Social and Recreational Benefits***

Conservation Planning and Design offer social and recreational advantages over conventional layouts in several distinct ways.

- Pedestrian friendly neighborhoods,
- Community-wide greenways and trails,
- Increased interaction within the community due to the footpath system that connects the homes with interesting places to visit.

#### ***Economic Benefits***

- Lower costs including reduced infrastructure engineering and construction costs, for example shorter roads, less wetland/creek crossings, less stormwater management facilities and less wood clearing.
- Value appreciation; it has been proven that properties within Conservation Planned and Designed communities appreciate markedly more than their counterparts in conventional communities.

- **Reduced Demand for New Public Parkland;** The natural areas that are preserved and the recreational amenities that are provided in Conservation Planned and Designed communities help to reduce the demand for public open space, parkland, playing fields, and other areas for active and passive recreation. Current deficiencies with regard to such public amenities will inevitable grow larger as population continues to rise. To the extent that each new development meets some of its own local needs, pressure on local governments will be lessened in this regard, a factor that may make such designs more attractive to local reviewing bodies.

## New Urbanism

New urbanism refers to a movement dedicated to improving the human experience of the urban fabric and functionality of our cities. It addresses manifold problems relative to the way typical cities function in the United States of America. The problems that our cities face include tremendous waste and misdirection of resources. Firstly, our most precious resource, time; secondly, the costs and loss of productivity from time spent in auto traffic; thirdly, there are social and spiritual impoverishment in isolation and alienation contributing to social diseases; fourthly, lack of easy access to nature areas and open space, unhealthy air and an urban environment that thwarts our fundamental need for the most basic exercise, walking. The underpinnings of a healthier, more effective and efficient urban arrangement requires citizens, planners, and developers to strive for development that provides characteristics such as: Walkability, Connectivity, Mixed-Use and Diversity, Quality Architecture and Urban Design, Smart Transportation, Sustainability, and Quality of Life.

Essentially, New Urbanist principles benefit every sector of a city, from residents to businesses, developers to municipal governments. The benefits to each group are summarized below:

**Residents** enjoy easy access and proximity to a high quality public realm of open space, parks, civic uses and retail with a local focus. A diverse mix of housing and pedestrian oriented development provides more walking, exercise and economic savings. Density also means utilities and roads are more efficient and tax dollars more effectively spent.

**Businesses** may expect increased sales resulting from pedestrian volume and increased discretionary spending available for residents; more profit results in live-work units, without a stressful and costly commute. There is also benefit in more community involvement and knowing customers who are residents: businesses tend to be more successful and the experience more pleasurable for customers when personal relationships are forged between business owners and their clientele. Economies of scale in marketing are possible due to proximity and cooperation with other local businesses.

**Developers** benefit from more income potential from higher density mixed-use projects due to more leasable square footage, more sales per square foot and higher property values and selling prices. There is faster sell out due to greater appeal and to wider market share. Other benefits include lower utilities costs resulting from the compact nature of New Urbanist design, less need for parking facilities and faster approvals in communities which have adopted new urbanist and smart growth principles.

**Municipalities** benefit from stable, appreciating tax base and spend less per capita on infrastructure and utilities than typical suburban development due to compact, high-density nature of projects. There is less traffic congestion due to the walkability of design, better overall community image and sense of place and less incentive to sprawl because the urban core area is more desirable. Other benefits include less crime and less spent on policing due to the presence of more people day and night and it is easy to install transit where it's not, and improve it where it is.

Source: <http://www.newurbanism.org/newurbanism/principles.html>

### References:

1. Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream, by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

### Links:

1. Congress for the New Urbanism is an organization dedicated to providing the tools to put into practice the principles of New Urbanism and revitalizing communities.  
<http://www.cnu.org/>
2. New Urban News,  
<http://www.newurbannews.com>
3. Smithsonian,  
<http://www.smithsonianmagazine.com/issues/2006/august/newurbanism.php>
4. Smart Growth Online  
<http://www.smartgrowth.org/>